

HISTORY OF THE LITERARY CULTURES OF EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE:

Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries Volume III: The Making and Remaking of Literary Institutions

Edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope (Virginia Commonwealth U) & John Neubauer (U of Amsterdam)

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This collection of essays marks a *significant* departure from traditional modes of cultural scholarship. This is the third Volume in a series of studies on the literary cultures of East-Central Europe and features four large "nodes" of scholarship relating to: I. Publishing and Censorship, II. Theater as a Literary Institution (including Modernism: The Director Rules, and Theater Under Socialism), III. Forging Primal Pasts: The Uses of Folklore, and, IV. Literary Histories: Itineraries of National Self-Images. Each of these nodes is broken down into related sub-sections that include regional and cross-cultural perspectives. Edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope (Professor of English and Director of Media, Art and Text Ph.D. Program, Virginia Commonwealth U, Richmond, USA), and John Neubauer (Professor Emeritus, Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures, U Amsterdam, Netherlands), this scholarly compendium assembles cutting-edge knowledge by some of the foremost experts in the field. What is particularly remarkable about this Volume is the inter-connectedness and breadth of scholarship assembled around the key or "nodal" points of culture, a departure from more traditional, linear-minded and individualistic modes of scholarship.

Over 120 world-class scholars abound in this collaboration as part of an ongoing project on the history of the literary cultures. The principles of the series to which this volume belongs were outlined by its general editors, Linda Hutcheon and Mario Valdés (University of Toronto). There are 21 other volumes in this same series covering topics including Expressionism, Symbolism, Avant-garde literatures of the 20th century, International Postmodernism, Caribbean literatures, as well as collections devoted to periods such as the Renaissance and the Romantics. What makes this recent Volume of particular interest is its success in capturing the essence of literary expression in East-Central Europe, while considering the impact of both longer and more recent histories. The scholarly research in this compendium is meticulous, detailed and accurate, a testament not only to the collaborating authors but to the editing skills of John Neubauer and Marcel Cornis-Pope. For example, focused attention is given to the censorship of some of the finest authors of the Twentieth Century in Bohemia, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Latvia with cross-references to censorship in the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, the scholars in this volume have applied contemporary

theoretical models to their subjects while contextualizing them within global and trans-national perspectives. Given the centuries of wars, border-clashes, Cultural-exchanges, trans-migrations, and other manifold forms of influence, this approach is highly appropriate to the remarkable breadth and depth of cultures examined here. Even a cursory view of the works cited reveals references to the "who's who" of world critical thinking but more importantly, included here are analyses of elements here that are as rare as they are salient. Focal points in the analyses cover critics and authors such as, Samuel Beckett, Homi Bhabba, Bertolt Brecht, Jorge Luis Borges, Italo Calvino, Marvin Carlson, Karel Capek, Anton Chekov, Jacques Derrida, Modris Eksteins Hans Georg Gadamer, Marija Gimbutas, Johann Goethe, Algirdas Greimas, Robert Graves, Jerzy Grotowski, Michael Holquist, Lewis Hyde, Henrik Ibsen, Roman Jakobson, Hans Robert Jauss, Carl Jung Karoly Kerényi, Arthur Koestler, Milan Kundera, Federico Garcia Lorca, Gyorgi Lukacs, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Czeslaw Milosz, Jan Mukarovsky, Lazlo Nagy, Wa Thiongo Ngugi, Andra Nieburga, Milorad Pavic, Josef Safarik, Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Schlegel, Josef Skvorecky, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, August Strindberg, Tristan Tzara, and Vaira Vike Freiberga (former President of Latvian, theorist and specialist in mythology), to name only a few in an epic list of those who have reshaped European and world thinking in reference to criticism and literature. The depth of coverage spinning out of the common nodal points of discussion such as "censorship," "theatre" or "mythology," is invaluable for those who are interested in Foucauldian style genealogical traces of cultural influences and socio-cultural phenomena.

In the past, historical approaches to literature and culture have followed a variety of paths, each with their own limitations, including positivist and orthodox Marxist models, Hegelian organicist and teleological perspectives, nationalist views, discussions of "grand narratives. This volume avoids the weaknesses inherent in all of these approaches. The challenge with assembling this sort of scholarly compendium is the difficulty of finding scholars who are sufficiently multilingual and multidisciplinary to conduct comparative and historical analyses. When this volume and the two previous to it were originally conceived there were debates as to which socio-cultural groups should be included. The initial intention was to focus on all countries including the Baltic states that in August 1939 were somehow involved with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact as well as other agreements between the Soviet Union and Germany. Complications arose as to whether the Baltics were part of Scandinavia and the fact that it was not until 1955 that Austria regained independence. Complications arise in how to address mass occupations such as that of the former Soviet Union or the Austro-Hungarian domination of Central-Europe. Additional complications include issues such as the Cold War (c. 1945-1990) during the period of the "iron curtain," and correlative hegemonies within the "Soviet Bloc." Further complications arise when considering the powerful influences of peripheral powers such as Turkey, and the deeper historical influences of powerbases such as the Ottoman Empire. If

we add to this mix the role of religion and reactions to it, including Christian (Protestant and Catholic) Jewish, Muslim, agnostic, and atheist, then the complexities become even more apparent. Wisely, the plan became to abandon nation-based historical cultural tracings as impossible because they failed to consider the influences of co-relative and contiguous cultures. The ultimate direction of this volume is based on heterogenous analyses of cultures in this important geographic area. The resultant multi-faceted perspectives successfully avoid the pitfalls of paraphrase, cultural cliché, and stereotype.

This collection of inter-connected essays is highly successful in re-articulating the history of East-Central European literatures by considering the various "nodal" points through consistent comparative principles. Eschewing monological and didactic perspectives, the scholars in this collection offer unconstrained and cross-cultural viewpoints of literature as inherently epistemological, open, and dialogical in the senses employed by thinkers such as Umberto Eco, or Mikhail Bakhtin. While still considering geo-cultural influences, these scholars, say as much about the conjunctions as the disjunctions that range across this highly inter-ethnic and inter-cultural region. Notions of national cultural paradigms are reconsidered from marginalized perspectives that speak more of interfaces than isolated and singular dominant powers. Hence, essays that examine issues of censorship or perspectives on cultural identity during times of occupation reveal the diachronic and metamorphic nature of literatures as they respond to each other and to socio-cultural conditions. The essays included here do not attempt to be representative of specific cultural consciousnesses. Instead, by employing comparative models, these critics succeed in demonstrating trans-nationalisms, inter-regionalisms, and cosmopolitan isms, that are rhizomatic in structure. There is no unified over-view of an organic whole. Instead, micro-histories are paralleled with macro-histories linked to linguistic, socio-cultural, political-economic, and military-industrial forces which have shaped and re-shaped the oral and written cultures of these regions, often through forceful intervention. Salient and informed contributions are featured by noted scholars such as Endre Bojtar, Karl Jirgens, Violeta Kelertes, Banuta Rubess, Robert Pynsent, Jolanta Natalia Sujecka, Mihaly Szegedy-Maszak, Josef Szili, Juri Talvet, Ewa Wachocka, among many other excellent thinkers, too numerous to mention here, including editors Cornis-Pope and Neubauer themselves. Contained within this approach are analyses of bio-texts, inter-textual influences, transformations of education, media and communications. "National awakenings" are contextualized within larger developments and the impact of cultural transactions. Presuppositions regarding national identities are deconstructed, and notions of "culture" as some imagined or unified phenomenon, definable through fixed precepts, are abandoned. Instead, there are micro-histories covering influential events such as the emergence of literary journals, Zamisdad publications, newspapers, publishing houses, literary societies, early stage productions, as well as the inception of theatres, academies, libraries and other cultural phenomena emerging in the face of

larger cultural forces. In addition, this volume examines revivals of language after years of oppression, the role of translation, the psychic and political impact of censorship, myth in oral and written traditions, the political role of presses and publishing houses, the impact of historical fictions, the impact of canonization and the shaping of cultural identities as inspired by literature. This study will prove highly worthy not only to those who are interested in East-Central European culture, but also those who seek scholarly and analytic alternatives to exclusionary and hegemonic approaches to the understanding of literature. This volume features a refreshing, pragmatic and enlightened methodology that interprets and illuminates regional cultural developments while recognizing the transformative effects of the larger regional and global milieu.